

Part Two

The Fosters lived in a large six-storey house in New York City. It was a gloomy place, and few people came to visit them. They had four servants, and on this particular morning Mrs Foster was flying from room to room pretending to supervise them. Actually, she was thinking of nothing at all except that she was going to miss her plane.

"What time is it, Walker?" she said to the butler as she passed him.

"It's ten minutes past nine, Madam."

"It takes an hour to get to the airport," she said. "My plane leaves at eleven. I have to be there half an hour beforehand for the formalities. I just know I'm going to be late."

"I think you have plenty of time, Madam," the butler said kindly. "I warned Mr Foster that you must leave at nine-fifteen. There's still another five minutes."

"Yes, Walker, I know, I know. But get the luggage in quickly, will you please?"

She began walking up and down the hall, repeatedly asking the butler the time. This was the one plane she must not miss. It had taken months to persuade her husband to allow her to go. If she missed it, he might decide that she should cancel the whole thing. And the trouble was that he insisted on coming to the airport to see her off.

"Dear God," she said aloud, "I'm going to miss it. I know I'm going to miss it." The little muscle beside the left eye was twitching madly now. The eyes were very close to tears.

"What time is it, Walker?"

"It's eighteen minutes past, Madam."

"Now I really will miss it," she cried. "Oh, I wish he would come!"

This was an important journey for Mrs Foster. She was going to Paris to visit her daughter, her only child, who was married to a Frenchman. Mrs Foster wanted to see her three beautiful grandchildren. She knew them only from photographs. She wanted to be near them, and take them for walks, and buy them presents, and watch them grow. She knew that it was wrong and in a way disloyal to have thoughts like these while her husband was still alive. She knew also that he would never consent to live in Paris. It was a miracle that he had agreed to let her fly over there alone for six weeks to visit them. How she wished she could live there always, and be close to them!

"Walker, what time is it?"

"Twenty-two minutes past, Madam."

As he spoke, Mr Foster came into the hall. He stood for a

moment, looking intently at his wife, and she looked back at him – at this diminutive but still quite dapper old man.

"Well," he said, "I suppose perhaps we'd better get going fairly soon if you want to catch that plane."

"Yes, dear – yes! Everything's ready. The car's waiting."

"That's good," he said, watching her closely.

"Here's Walker with your coat, dear. Put it on."

"I'll be with you in a moment," he said. "I'm just going to wash my hands."

"Walker, will I miss it?"

"No, Madam," the butler said. "I think you'll make it all right."

Then Mr Foster appeared again, and put on his coat. Mrs Foster hurried into the car. Her husband walked down the steps of the house slowly, pausing halfway to observe the sky and to sniff the cold morning air.

"It looks a bit foggy," he said as he sat down beside her in the car. "And it's always worse out there at the airport. I shouldn't be surprised if the flight's cancelled already."

"Don't say that, dear please."

They didn't speak again for a long time.

"The servants are all going off today. I gave them half-pay for six weeks. I'll move into the club tonight. It'll be a nice change," Mr Foster said.

"Yes, dear."

"I'll call in at the house occasionally to see that everything's all right and to pick up the mail."

"But shouldn't Walker stay there to look after things?" she asked meekly.

"Nonsense. It's quite unnecessary. And anyway, I'd have to pay him full wages. And you never know what people get up to when they're left alone in a house," and with that he took out a cigar and lit it with a gold lighter.

"Will you write to me?" she asked.

"I doubt it," he said. "You know I don't write letters unless there's something specific to say."

"Yes, dear, I know. So don't you bother."

The fog began to thicken and the car had to slow down.

"Oh dear!" cried Mrs Foster. "I'm sure I'm going to miss it now! What time is it?"

"Stop fussing," the old man said, "It doesn't matter anyway. It's bound to be cancelled now. They never fly in this sort of weather. I don't know why you bothered to come out. Of course, if by any chance it does go, I agree with you, you'll be certain to miss it now."

storey *etasje*
gloomy *dyster, trist*
particular *spesiell*
pretend *late som*
supervise *overvåke, kontrollere / overvåke, kontrollere*
butler *hushovmester/hushov-
meister*
persuade *[pə'sweɪd] overtale*
allow *tillate, gi lov til*
cancel *avlyse, avbestille*
consent *gå med på*

intently *med spent oppmerksom-
het / med spent merksemd*
diminutive *[dɪ'mɪnjətɪv] liten*
dapper *sirlig, pent kledd / sirlig,
pent kledd*
fairly *ganske, nokså*
appear *komme til syne*
foggy *tåkete*
cancel *avlyse, innstille*